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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 001292

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AMGT](#) [APER](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: REDESIGNATION OF REST AND RECUPERATION FOR  
DJIBOUTI

REF STATE 184131

1. (U) POST RESPONSES TO REFTEL, KEYED TO ELEVEN  
FACTORS LISTED IN 3 FAH-1 H3721.2-1, FOLLOW:

- 1A. CLIMATE: DJIBOUTI REMAINS ONE OF THE HOTTEST PLACES ON THE PLANET WHERE CLIMATIC CONDITIONS ARE VIRTUALLY CONSTANT THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TAXING PHYSICALLY AND IMPOSES KEY HEALTH CONCERNS THAT EXIST IN FEW OTHER FOREIGN SERVICE POSTS. AMONG OTHER FACTORS, STAFF MUST BE VIGILANT REGARDING SMALL, INCREMENTAL CHANGES THAT CAN OCCUR IN PERSONAL HEALTH STATUS ON A DAILY BASIS, ESPECIALLY FOR SYMPTOMS RELATED TO HEAT STROKE, DEHYDRATION, AND KIDNEY MALFUNCTION. MOREOVER, THE EXTREME HEAT LIMITS THE VOLUME AND TYPE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION AVAILABLE TO AMERICAN OFFICERS.
- 1B. ISOLATION: DJIBOUTI IS A SMALL COUNTRY IN THE HORN OF AFRICA THAT LACKS THE INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES TO TRAVEL OUTSIDE TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES ON A ROUTINE BASIS. THE FEW ROADS IN EXISTENCE ARE POORLY MAINTAINED AND VIRTUALLY IMPASSABLE DURING RAINY PERIODS. TRAINS ARE UNSAFE FOR TRAVEL BECAUSE OF AGING CONDITION OF ROLLING STOCK AND RAILS. ALSO, THE SINGLE RAIL LINE LEADING OUT OF DJIBOUTI HAS BEEN PLAGUED BY TERRORIST ATTACKS. ONLY ONE MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CARRIER OPERATES OUT OF DJIBOUTI, WHILE THREE OTHER REGIONAL CARRIERS OPERATE INFREQUENT FLIGHTS.
- 1C. ADEQUACY OF IN-COUNTRY TRANSPORT: DJIBOUTI LACKS SAFE AND RELIABLE IN-COUNTRY PUBLIC TRANSPORT. ROAD ACCIDENTS ARE ENDEMIC DUE TO A LACK OF A COUNTRYWIDE VEHICLE INSPECTION SYSTEM AND POOR DRIVING HABITS. TAXIS IN THE CAPITAL CITY ARE SUBSTANDARD AT BEST AND USE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT OUTSIDE OF DJIBOUTI CITY IS PROHIBITED ON SECURITY AND SAFETY GROUNDS.
- 1D. RECREATION FACILITIES: WITH THE EXCEPTION OF POST'S SWIMMING POOL, SMALL EXERCISE ROOM AND TENNIS COURT, FEW RECREATIONAL FACILITIES ARE PRESENT SIMILAR TO THOSE FOUND AT LARGER POSTS. AS A SEP POST WITHOUT A MARINE SECURITY DETACHMENT, INITIATIVES AROUND WHICH A NUMBER OF COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES CAN BE ORGANIZED ARE ABSENT. ON ITS OWN, POST IS TRYING TO DEVELOP AND INAUGURATE A "SNACK-BAR" TO ENCOURAGE AND FOSTER COMMUNITY-BASED ACTIVITIES AND A PLACE FOR MISSION MEMBERS TO MEET AND DINE TOGETHER. HOWEVER, BRINGING THIS FACILITY ON LINE OVER THE COMING MONTHS WILL NOT IMMEDIATELY MITIGATE THE PROBLEM THAT NOW EXISTS. THERE IS NO FACILITY FOR LARGE-SCALE INDOOR MEETINGS AWAY FROM THE OPPRESSIVE HEAT. THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE, LOCATED ON THE COMPOUND, IS TOO SMALL TO ACCOMMODATE A SINGLE GATHERING OF AMERICAN STAFF. IN THE "TOWN" OF DJIBOUTI, LITTLE OR NO PERSONAL ENTERTAINMENT OUTLETS EXIST, SUCH AS LIVE THEATER OR CINEMAS FEATURING FIRST-RUN ENGLISH LANGUAGE FILMS. QUALITY RESTAURANTS THAT MEET MINIMUM U.S. HEALTH STANDARDS ARE FEW. GIVEN THE PAUCITY OF RECREATIONAL ALTERNATIVES, AMERICAN OFFICERS ARE LEFT TO THEIR OWN INITIATIVE TO BREAK UP THE MONOTONY OF THE HOME-TO-OFFICE-TO-HOME ROUTINE. YOUNG, UNACCOMPANIED OFFICERS ON THEIR FIRST TOUR OF DUTY, ARE MOST IMPACTED AND THEY COMPRISE THE GREATER VOLUME OF AMERICAN OFFICER STAFF.
- 1E. HOUSING CONDITIONS: POST HOUSING CONDITIONS ARE SATISFACTORY. HOWEVER, DUE TO LACK OF CONSTRUCTION INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE COUNTRY, EXPANDING THE POST'S HOUSING POOL TO MEET THE GROWING NEEDS OF NEWLY ASSIGNED OFFICERS HAS BEEN PROBLEMATIC. ASSIGNED OFFICERS WAITING IN TEMPORARY QUARTERS TO GET INTO PERMANENT HOUSING IS ONE OF POST'S MOST PRESSING PROBLEMS. THE FRONT OFFICE HAS PUT "QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES" HIGH ON POST MANAGEMENT'S PRIORITY LIST. NONETHELESS, AS POST GROWS INTO ITS NEW EMBASSY COMPOUND (NEC) PLANNED FOR CONSTRUCTION IN FY-07, EXPANDING STAFFING LEVELS WILL KEEP PRESSURE ON MANAGEMENT TO PROVIDE AN EVER-INCREASING HOUSING POOL FOR ITS ICASS CLIENTS.
- 1F. UNSANITARY CONDITIONS: DJIBOUTI HAS INHERITED A FRENCH COLONIAL MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE THAT HAS NOT

BEEN KEPT IN GOOD REPAIR. CONSEQUENTLY, HUMAN WASTE DRAINAGE AND TREATMENT IN A CITY BARELY ABOVE SEA LEVEL PRESENTS A HEALTH PROBLEM CITYWIDE. LEACHING OF WASTE INTO GROUND WATER IS ALSO A SPECIAL CONCERN IN USG HOUSING AREAS WHERE OCCUPANTS MUST TAKE SPECIAL CARE TO BOIL AND FILTER HOUSEHOLD WATER PRIOR TO CONSUMPTION. MOREOVER, THE CITY LANDSCAPE IS LITTERED WITH SOLID REFUSE AND THE COUNTRY LACKS AN EFFICIENT WASTE AND COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL SYSTEM. THESE CONDITIONS ALONE POSE SPECIAL HEALTH PROBLEMS.

- 1G. LACK OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES: CITY POWER SUPPLY IN DJIBOUTI IS NOT UP TO MINIMUM STANDARDS. FREQUENT OUTAGES AND "BROWNOUTS" STRAIN THE EMBASSY'S CAPACITY TO SUPPLY POWER TO HOUSEHOLDS AND THE WORK PLACE. PROVISION AND USE OF STAND-BY GENERATORS AT EACH LOCATION IS A MUST. SURGES IN POWER ARE CONSTANT REMINDERS OF INADEQUATE POWER LEVELS.
- 1H. LACK OF ADEQUATE MEDICAL/DENTAL CARE: AGAIN, POST MUST SUBMIT THAT MEDICAL CARE IN DJIBOUTI DOES NOT APPROACH THE MINIMUM ACCEPTABLE LEVELS FOR SIMILAR CARE IN THE U.S. OR EUROPE. POST HAS A SMALL HEALTH TREATMENT FACILITY ON THE EMBASSY COMPOUND STAFFED BY A TCN HEALTH CARE MANAGER, WITH THE RMO RESIDENT IN SANAA AND SCHEDULED FOR VISITS TO POST ON A QUARTERLY BASIS. FOR EMERGENCY CARE, POST MUST RELY ON AN "AS AVAILABLE" ARRANGEMENT IT HAS ESTABLISHED WITH A FRENCH FACILITY RESERVED FOR TREATMENT OF FRENCH MILITARY PERSONNEL. FOR A COMPLETE REPORT ON BASIC MEDICAL CARE AT POST SEE STATE MED'S WEB SITE ON THE INTRANET.
- 1I. PREVALENCE OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASE: FOLLOWING IS A REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF DISEASES ENDEMIC TO DJIBOUTI: COLDS AND RESPIRATORY DISEASES, DIARRHEA, HEPATITIS, MALARIA, DENGUE FEVER, TUBERCULOSIS, SCHISTOSOMIASIS, AND HIV/AIDS. MALARIA PROPHYLAXIS IS REQUIRED.
- 1J. UNUSUAL PERSONAL HAZARDS: IN ADDITION TO THOSE STATED ABOVE, POST OFFERS PARTICULAR CHALLENGES AND HAZARDS BECAUSE OF ITS UNIQUE LOCATION AS A FOCAL POINT FOR THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM. ALTHOUGH, RISK OF VIOLENT CRIME IS REMOTE, DISPLACED PERSONS FROM SURROUNDING COUNTRIES CONTINUE TO FIND THEIR WAY TO THE STREETS OF DJIBOUTI CREATING A POTENTIALLY VOLATILE ENVIRONMENT. AS STATED ABOVE, THE POOR STATE OF DJIBOUTI'S TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE PLACES POST PERSONNEL AT GREATER RISK FROM ACCIDENTS ALONE.
- 1K. EXCESSIVE COST OF TRANSPORTATION FROM POST TO A SUITABLE RELIEF AREA: TRANSPORTATION COSTS ON THE SINGLE EUROPEAN CARRIER WHICH SERVICES DJIBOUTI, AIR FRANCE, COMPARE FAVORABLY TO OTHER CARRIER AIR TRANSPORT COSTS SERVICING THE SAME ROUTE, OR ALTERNATIVE RELIEF LOCATIONS OUTSIDE OF THE HORN OF AFRICA REGION. ON A COST COMPARATIVE BASIS, COST OF TRAVEL TO AN ALTERNATE RELIEF AREA FAR EXCEED THE COST OF THE DIRECT ROUTE TO THE PRESENT DESIGNATED R&R POINT.
12. (U) POST STRONGLY RECOMMENDS REDESIGNATION OF DJIBOUTI AS ELIGIBLE FOR R&R TRAVEL BASED ON CONTINUING HEALTH AND WELFARE NEEDS AS OUTLINE ABOVE.
- RAGSDALE